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From the Associate Editor: Connecting with Community Partners and Student Scholars

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Connecting with Community Partners and Student Scholars

As a board member and reviewer I had read many compelling manuscripts each with the potential to make significant contributions to the practice and scholarship of engagement. This has encouraged me, as associate editor, to see more first-time authors, particularly students and community partners, published in *JCES*. While *JCES* has always been responsive to the needs of communities, community partners, and students, issue 7.1 is a significant new step toward enhancing the connections between our professional knowledge and practice and our community partners and student scholars.

Our Community Voices essay is unique because it's a community piece written by a student, Jason Merrick. Jason, a third year social work major at Northern Kentucky University, is the voluntary chairman for the Northern Kentucky chapter of a grassroots community organization known as People Advocating Recovery (PAR). PAR's mission is to remove the barriers to long-term recovery from the disease of drug addiction, and to address the stigma and discrimination associated with addiction. He also works part time at Transition's Grateful Life Center, a 100-bed inpatient long-term men's recovery center. He's a very impressive young man who has already accomplished a lot. His essay is written from his perspective as a community activist.

Service-learning is all about becoming better citizens. By engaging ourselves with a community through service-learning, we develop first-hand knowledge, an understanding of the intricacies of real world, small-town social and power systems, and we are enriched with a fuller appreciation of the relationships between community and academy. Our Student Voices paper is a collaboration between four undergraduate students and their faculty advisor from the University of Virginia. While the paper itself is a compelling account of how their work in South Africa helped improve a community and expand their own intellectual and practical horizons, it is their transference of that knowledge that will help us create a more inclusive platform for the larger community of scholars. This paper is significant too; it is the first article reviewed by members of our student editorial board-SCOPE (Scholars for Community Outreach, Partnership and Engagement).

SCOPE membership is currently limited to University of Alabama undergraduate and graduate students from all disciplines. Graduate students who are members of SCOPE are recognized as SCOPE Fellows and are offered the opportunity to serve on the *JCES* Editorial Review Board as reviewers of manuscripts for the Student Voices section of *JCES*, under the guidance of Editorial Liaison Dr. Melanie Miller and Editorial Assistant Vicky Carter. The use of SCOPE Fellows as Student Voices reviewers is the brainchild of *JCES* Editor Dr. Cassie Simon. It is her vision to expand this board to include student reviewers at other universities in the near future. Our thanks to our first three reviewers; their comments made this a far better and more useful paper.

The remainder of this issue is an alluring blend of cutting-edge engagement research, collaborations, and innovative pedagogies. Paige Bray and her associates share a deliberation guide to successful collaborative partnerships between parents and families and schools. Chaebong Nam discusses a youth asset mapping project conducted by a group of African American youth, who investigated local assets available for teens to create a map using digital media tools in order to develop and share information. David Dunbar and his team present their analysis of a model for designing and conducting an interdisciplinary team-taught community-based research course employing instructors with different disciplinary backgrounds and areas of expertise.

Sarah Banks and her co-authors introduce us to the advantages of using co-inquiry to design and manage projects and in the process they provide critical new insights into the process of collaboration. Sharon Paynter shares a provocative discussion on how engaged scholarship and applied research intersect and forces us to reconsider many strongly held beliefs about the work we do. Melissa Simon and her team describe what we believe is the first community-based participatory research study to elicit perceptions of research within an underserved suburban community. They examined community members' knowledge and attitudes about research as a way to improve our understanding of and participation in research within rapidly growing, underserved suburban populations. Finally, Demetria Rougeaux Shabazz and Leda Cooks demonstrate how increased cultural competencies could be learned as a result of improved intergroup understanding, interaction, and dialogue in their adaptation of asset mapping.